



National Sheriffs' Association

Google Waze App Information

Waze: A Tool to Facilitate Ambush Attacks on Law Enforcement and Threaten Community Safety

NSA is supportive of the Google Waze App but is emphatically opposed to the police locator feature within the App. There is no moral, ethical or legal reason to have the police locator button on the app. Our concerns are for officer safety and community safety. Wazers can use this feature to avoid law enforcement or to find law enforcement to carry out possible acts of violence against that officer. We are concerned that terrorists, organized crime groups, and gangs will find this a valuable tool to further their illegal activities.

Our number one concern is officer safety. We agree that if a person is intent on harming an officer they could do it without the app. The question becomes, why put a tool in their hand that aids them in locating law enforcement?

Our second concern is community safety. There is evidence that shows that drunk drivers use the App to avoid law enforcement, meaning they then put public safety at risk by drinking and driving, knowing they can drive an alternate route to miss DUI/DWI checkpoints or an officer on duty.

According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, 16 law enforcement officers were killed in ambushes in 2014 and, the previous year, 12 were killed in similar incidents. "This is unacceptable, not one deputy or officer should ever be put at risk for corporate gain. This feature risks the lives of innocent drivers and law enforcement professionals," said Jonathan Thompson, Executive Director and CEO of the Association. "The public overwhelmingly supports its Sheriffs and law enforcement personnel. Yet, the criminals and law breakers are a vocal and dangerous minority, even more so with this feature."

In a recent statement to the *Associated Press*, Waze spokeswoman Julie Mossler, said "the app was designed to improve traffic safety because noting any emergency vehicles on the road – including police cars – would encourage drivers to slow down." NSA doesn't agree with this assessment, logically those who are speeding will use the App to find the police officer, slow down, then once they have passed and the App shows the roads are clear, they will speed up.

NSA refuses to wait until another officer get ambushed, a terrorist attack is carried out, or a family is destroyed by a drunk driver. It is just a matter of time before this happens and proof will surface that the Waze Police Locator Button was used.

The National Sheriffs' Association hopes that Google will:

- Remove the law enforcement locator from the App
- Remove the capability to pinpoint the law enforcement officer's location
- Do not relocate the technology capabilities to a different part of the App.

Supporters of the National Sheriffs' Association to remove the Police Locator Button from the Google Waze App are increasing daily.

Blog Posts on the Waze App to Avoid Drunk Driving

We are already seeing evidence that drivers who drink are using the feature. They use this feature to avoid law enforcement after a night of drinking. See below a few comments pulled from online discussion boards.

"FlyBoy – Waze is the bomb, my friends and I always turn it on when we leave the bar and plan our route accordingly. I have not had a speeding ticket or DWI since I have been using the app. They just want the money, do they care if you kill yourself speeding or drinking. Chill Out!!"

"Yep. DUI checkpoints don't work. Police know they don't work. But they use them anyway so they can bust people for other offenses. It keeps me out of jail. MADD doesn't like it? Must be good, then."

"Add the DUI alert. This is not Nazi America, lets me check your papers, just because I can. That's bull. Don't give away your freedoms. WAZE needs to add the Alerts. If not someone else will and that is where I will go. Until then I will use the cop button."

"Good buy trapster I am going to waze cuz my peeps and I need to know where the cops are when we leave our waterhole."

According to Autoblog (via TechDirt), police officers in Miami have been downloading the Waze app and using it to flood the database with false locations for police speed traps. The Miami Police Department denies this.

Statistical Data

Ambush Type Attacks on Law Enforcement increased dramatically from 2013 (12) to 2014 (16)

Waze has been associated with one ambush type attack on two law enforcement officers in New York, posting on social media that the perpetrator had tracked officers, demonstrating having used Waze the day prior to the murders. The perpetrator committed suicide and we will never know the full extent of the application having been used in the crime.

Avoiding Law Enforcement: Criminal Activity, Checkpoints, Speed Enforcement

A total of 32,719 people died in motor vehicle crashes in 2013.¹ The U.S. Department of Transportation's most recent estimate of the annual economic cost of crashes was \$277 billion dollars.² Contributing to the death toll are alcohol, speeding, lack of safety belt use, and other problematic driver behaviors. Each of these elements has been demonstrated by users on social media as using the Waze application to avoid detection of these criminal and dangerous behaviors.

Impaired Driving

Every day, almost 30 people in the United States die in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. This amounts to one death every 51 minutes.³ The annual cost of alcohol-related crashes totals more than \$59 billion.⁴

Sobriety checkpoints

How can deaths and injuries from impaired driving be prevented? According to the CDC, effective measures include the use of sobriety checkpoints and that these checkpoints consistently reduce alcohol-related crashes, typically by 9%.⁵ Using the Waze application to avoid checkpoints endangers law enforcement, the impaired driver, and the community.

Speeding

Social media demonstrates clear use of the Waze application to detect and avoid speed enforcement. In 2013, speeding was a factor in 29 percent of motor vehicle crash deaths. Speeding has been a factor in about 30 percent of crash deaths since 2004. Speeding was defined to include crashes in which the driver was issued a traffic citation for speeding or in which driver-related factors coded indicated speed as a factor (driving too fast for conditions, racing or exceeding the posted speed limit).⁶ Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. The economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is estimated by NHTSA to be \$40.4 billion per year.⁷

1. <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/general-statistics/fatalityfacts/overview-of-fatality-facts>
2. <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/general-statistics/fatalityfacts/overview-of-fatality-facts>
3. http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/impaired-driv_factsheet.html
4. http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/impaired-driv_factsheet.html
5. http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/impaired-driv_factsheet.html
6. www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/general-statistics/fatalityfacts/overview-of-fatality-facts
7. <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810998.pdf>